

THE BIG MO

A CULTURAL ICON

A South Carolina Drive-in Resurrects 50s' Americana

By Tom Poland

Hollywood idols command the silver screen, shooting stars pierce the night, and the aroma of grilled hot dogs and buttered popcorn commingles with bug spray. Milk Duds again reign supreme, and Monetta, South Carolina's population triples overnight.

When Richard and Lisa Boaz opened the Big Mo March 26, 1999, they saved a cultural icon from junkyard duty. The Wizard of Oz debuted, and some 60,000 cars have since rolled in for family films and a return to the 50s...

Dusk. The lights drop. Startled kids hustle from the playground to their parents' cars. The "Star Spangled Banner" plays to a chorus of patriotic car horns and an archaic 3,600-watt projector beams magic onto the screen. Cars from Augusta, Aiken, Columbia, Myrtle Beach, and points in-between dial FM 94.3 for audio superior to clumsy window-clinging speakers. A few kids in PJs and one grownup stroll to the concession stand. All come to enjoy that one-time Mecca for wanderlust teenagers... the drive-in. Many romantics will confess their first kiss and first drive-in went together.

The drive-in still exudes romance. "Couples will have their first date here, and they'll come back a year later to get engaged," said Richard. "We're waiting to cater a wedding with corn dogs and popcorn," adds Lisa. Frequent patrons get Stargazer cards for prizes, and it's not just hyperbole. The Monetta heavens, free of big-city light pollution, sparkle with celestial treats. One night a total lunar eclipse occurred, and "last year," said Richard, "Mars put on a fantastic show."

Sam Bogo opened the drive-in April 26, 1951, and it prospered until the early 1970s when multiplex theaters debuted, eventually closing in 1986. When the Boazs bought it, the marquee's letters had blown away, but sunlight had burned "Closed For Vacation" into the concrete. Well, the vacation's long been over. Go. Rediscover what it's like to be 17 again at a 50s icon in tranquil Palmetto peach country. The Big Mo.

Find out more...

The Big Mo Movie-Line
803-685-7949
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